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CAUSES OF DELINQUENCY AMONG GIRLS

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Work with delinquent girls is much more difficult and less hopeful than work with delinquent boys. The girls are more emotional and less reasonable than the boys. During the early years of adolescence, when the delinquent girl is apt to become troublesome, she is often a very difficult person to help; often hysterical, not knowing what she wants nor why she wants it. It is usually the girl from the broken home, and this is one of the chief causes of her delinquency, where the mother has been taken and she has been left to the care of an elder relative, or where there is a stepmother who may not have much sympathy or patience with the girl, and the home is not attractive. If there is a mother she is frequently too tired and overworked herself with the care of a large family, and the conditions are impossible for social life if the family is living in a few small, crowded rooms.

The girl wants to have a good time, and without thought of evil she must go from home to find her pleasures, especially if she has been working long hours in a mill or factory all day, it is perfectly natural that she should desire some recreation in the evening. Proper places have not been provided for this. The vulgar theater and the dance hall in connection with the saloon in too many communities are the only places open for her. There has been more public sentiment about providing recreation for boys in the way of clubs and gymnasiums than for girls, possibly because it is generally thought that a girl should be at home with her mother; an excellent place for her, provided she has a wise, sympathetic mother and a good home, but the delinquent girls are usually the girls who have no mother and who have very little or no home training.

Another cause for delinquency among girls is the lack of care for the feeble-minded girl. She is usually well developed physically, kind-hearted, a willing worker. She can be self-supporting, but should never be self-directing. There is no place in the eastern part of Pennsylvania to-day for the feeble-minded child. The ex-

cellent school at Elwyn is overcrowded. In many of the rural communities feeble-minded girls are allowed to drift in and out of the county almshouses, bearing illegitimate children, which are an added burden to the state. These girls are often the children of inebriate or epileptic parents. They should be kindly treated, but should have custodial care past the child-bearing period.

Another cause of delinquency is the inefficiency in our training. In many parts of the state in communities outside of the large cities very little attention is paid to the compulsory education law. Children are allowed to leave school at an early age because their parents think they need their financial help, and the girl has lost interest in her school work. There is no public sentiment to hold that girl in school until fourteen years of age, at least. We need more industrial and manual training in our public schools for the girls just as well as for the boys. Much more has been done to give the boys manual training and other hand work. We should give the girls the sewing, basket weaving, sloyd, domestic science, especially in the lower grades, and not confine this work to the grammar grades and high school, when so many girls do not stay in school long enough to reach the high grades. We are apt to think of the problems in delinquency and the juvenile court as belonging to the large cities; the rural communities have their problems, too, where the railroad station and the saloon are the only places open if the young girl wants a place to go and something to do. In some places the library has met this need. Where there is no library there should be the larger use of the schoolhouse, using it for a social center for the community. It should be open in the evening for classes and clubs with the right kind of supervision, which is the secret of all successful work with young people. We need in all communities, both in the cities and in the smaller places, recreation centers, whether it is a building for that special purpose or the schoolhouse; with the enforcement of good child labor laws and the compulsory education laws to keep the girls out of the factories and mills and in school until fourteen years of age, at least. We need to have the art of home-making taught to our girls in the public schools or some of them will never learn it, because of the lack of home life.

The juvenile court and probation have done much to help delinquent girls. There are very few girls compared with the num-

ber of boys, and it is much more difficult to help the girl with probation than the boy. The very freedom which the girl seeks is often hard to give her without having her abuse that privilege. The girl is usually brought into court for what is called incorrigibility. This is often the girl of foreign parents, who has become restless with the restraint of home, is unwilling to be guided by her parents. It is not an easy matter for the probation officer to hold the girl, either in that home, or by finding another place for her. A boy may be grossly immoral and his immorality does not always find him out and follow him; it is not so easy for the girl who has been immoral to be helped back to a normal place in society. This is a factor in the situation which we will always have to meet, and which makes the work with girls so much less hopeful. The probation officer for the girls should always be a woman, and she should be a tactful, well-balanced person, who has sympathy with young people. Probation has done much for the delinquent girl in giving the restless, discontented, unhappy girl the right kind of a friend, who has sometimes been able to keep the girl in her own home, or to find the right kind of place for her elsewhere. It is not wise to give the girl as many chances with probation as the boy, and it is a mistake to feel that every girl should have probation first. If a girl has commenced to lead an immoral life it is usually better to give her a period of training and then try probation, rather than to give her the freedom which she would abuse and perhaps be the cause of getting others into trouble.